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The book is timely, and will be of great service to those who are concerned with the national expansion of the United States, and desire to know as directly as possible the course of expansion of other nations.

FRANK W. BLACKMAR.

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The Political Economy of Humanism. By HENRY WOOD. Boston : Lee & Shephard, 1901. 12mo, pp. 318.

It can never be quite the thing to quarrel with an author because he wishes to contribute to popular education by writing popular books. But to have a writer tell you in black and white for three hundred odd pages what everyone knows before, to have him give you nothing which is not so much a matter of course in the intellectual world that the reader feels faint with the reiteration of commonplace—this is a little too much to endure. It is simply impossible to treat such an opus seriously, it is either a joke or a mistake and to be passed over as lightly as possible. Mainly because the book is in itself so colorless, so indefinite and general, there is nothing strong or definite or special to be said about it. It is not astonishing, however, to find that notwithstanding this Mr. Wood's book has reached a number of editions before it appeared in its latest form. Books that attempt no solution of problems, but only sermonize in a gentle, vague way, encouraging by its very vagueness, are welcomed by the great number who will not be troubled with questions. Mr. Wood's book may be pleasant to read in the evening before going to bed, the comfortably rounded sentences strike gentle taps upon the ear without disturbing the brain. And the delightful, mysterious optimism, which is its keynote, assures us that the world is all right, going on sedately at a timely pace ; in the end all will be well, let us be pleased with the Established Order. The shibboleth of this comfortable existence is the word "Humanism," or rather Natural Law plus Humanism, which Mr. Woods points to as the underlying thought of his argument. What he means by "Humanism" he never states, but he implies that it is a future condition of unselfishness (p. 14), and that if Natural Law be observed Humanism will be inaugurated. Whether this means unselfishness on our part or on somebody's else he leaves unsaid, but to judge from the general tenor of the twenty-six chapters or articles enclosed under the title, he plainly advocates self-love and leaves altruism *in spe*. In

his opinion it will all come in good time. In regard to Natural Law his attitude is equally non-committal as to statement of meaning. Natural Law evidently is not the physical force operating in Nature, but the mental force operating in conscious beings, particularly in man. Thus under Natural Law go law of supply and demand, of competition, of co-operation, etc., the whole range of social ideas dependent upon man's highly developed social faculties, what one might call his artificial existence rather than his natural. It is astonishing in the author's jumble of ideas how he can gather many heads under one hat by way of illustration. The following is a fair example :

The key to progress and approximate perfection in every department, whether physical, mental, moral, or even spiritual, is conformity to law. Take a few illustrations: A thorough observance of mental and physical hygienic law tends directly to healthful and normal individual development. A greater or less transgression brings a proportionate penalty. The penalty must be paid whether the violation be knowingly or ignorantly committed. A headache and nervous depression are very certain to follow a prolonged drunken revelry, but no more so than are panic and business stagnation to come after an era of wild speculation. That physical disease, the effect of which is to gradually thin the blood toward a watery condition, is no less certain in its logical result than will be the degradation of our monetary system to a silver or greenback basis. Legislation may for a while prevent the full assertion of law, but it is, nevertheless, an active, living force, unceasingly pressing in the direction of its natural fulfillment. A stream may be dammed on its way to the ocean, put the final tide-level of its waters is not a matter of question. It would be as reasonable to expect to increase the efficiency of one blade of a pair of shears by the mutilation of its companion, as to benefit either capital or labor by an antagonistic policy toward the other. Illustrations might be multiplied.

It is like a posy gathered from the fields of many realms. Law is, on the whole, the author's great word.

Natural Law is everywhere. Its lines as they permeate the business world may not be so easily traceable as in material science, but the evidence of their existence and rule is no less positive and unquestionable (p. 19). Law, complied with, brings harmony, and harmony introduces prosperity (p. 47). Idleness is a violation of Natural Law, and its companions in transgression are improvidence, degradation, intemperance, and decay (p. 53). The law of compensation is untiring in finding the specific gravity of every person, and in meting to him his deserts (p. 93). A tariff is an elastic

expression of national *policy*, and is based upon conditions which are constantly changing; therefore it has none of the exactness of Natural Law, though it has relations with it (p. 227). The universal reign of law is the grand truth, which, if everywhere recognized, would transform the world. All human infelicity, whether physical, social, economic, moral, or spiritual, comes from a disregard or violation of the Established Order. Law will not, and cannot, bend to human caprice, for its lines are immutable (p. 285).

If man live subject to law, Natural Law, Established Order, he shall be happy! If Mr. Wood would but inform us what he means by the Established Order! As far as we know, it has meant from immemorial time what human beings intended it to mean, and it has, as such, been anything but established; while the laws to which we might turn for explanation of its variations are at best but partially revealed. If he means nothing by it but sequence of events, that seems a plain matter to clothe in such high-sounding words. But all of Mr. Wood's optimism is high sounding and boastful; it is based upon spoil and without mercy to the victims. As on page 37:

It is deplorable that competition sometimes causes seamstresses to live in garrets and make shirts at starvation prices; but it should not be forgotten that for each one of these a hundred poor people, as a consequence, buy their shirts cheaply.

We hope the starving seamstresses may draw comfort from this, and feel due gratitude to Mr. Wood for his grasp of their situation. While, since the beginning of suffering, men and women have worked their lives to ruin in order to lessen the distance between the happy and the unhappy, increasing the mellow twilight, instead of maintaining the sharp contrast between light and shadow, Mr. Wood, with characteristic sanguineness, assures us that the social system is good enough, it is only the individuals who are at fault. As if the social system were a piece of iron sheeting which could stand by itself independent of individuals; as if the system and its makers were not an organic whole, so that when individuals are not good neither is the social system. But thus the book goes on page after page, paragraph after paragraph, in solemn, unceasing cascades of redundant oratory, every difficult and harassing question disposed of with slenderness of thought but greatness of manner, such as Goldsmith has characterized when he gently remarked to Sam Johnson: "If you were to write a fable about little fishes, Doctor, you would make the little fishes talk like whales."

A. M. W.